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by John C. Cort

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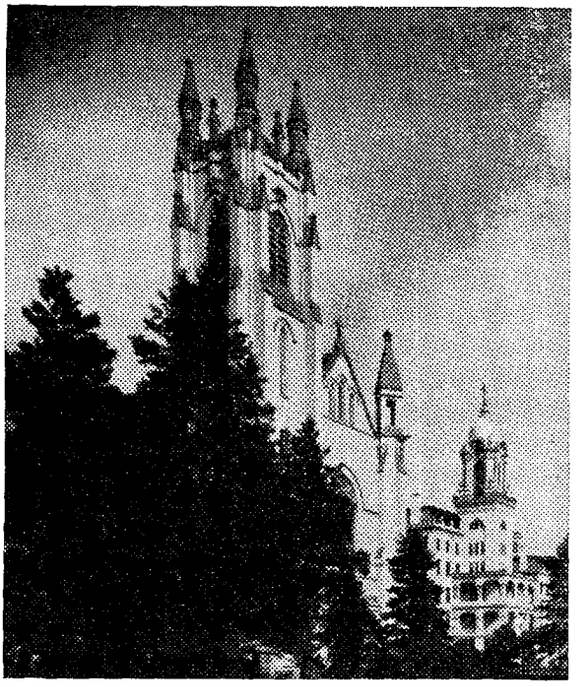

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

"SHIELD FOR FREEDOM"

IN THE LAST few weeks President Eisenhower has exerted unusual pressure on Congress on behalf of his foreign aid program. The Administration is obviously alarmed over the prospects for a key part of the President's program, and this alarm is well justified. Barring a rapid about-face in the next week or two, Congress is clearly going to give Mr. Eisenhower the most serious political rebuff he has yet received.

We regret this turn of events very much. Senator Fulbright recently said that the President has only himself to thank for the manhandling the foreign aid program has suffered. In this opinion he is joined by many political commentators, who blame most of the present difficulties of the Administration on contradictory statements by the President and members of his Cabinet on government spending, plus the failure of the President to take vigorous action earlier in the day on behalf of foreign aid. There is no doubt, too, that many Democratic members of Congress are reluctant these days to fight hard for any part of Mr. Eisenhower's program; they feel that they have done so in the past, only to find themselves ultimately out on a political limb without strong Administration support. They do not care to risk such a fate again.

Real as these facts may be, however, they do not alter the central situation. The foreign aid program is an important part of the foreign policy of the United States. Essentially, this foreign policy was shaped under Democratic Administrations; for Democrats to reject it now under a Republican regime is to deny and betray their own past. The foreign aid program has been cut and cut again; as matters now stand, the amount proposed for this purpose is far below that level which the President has called "absolutely essential for the security of the United States."

Mr. Eisenhower asked Congress to authorize the spending of $3.8 billion for foreign aid. In recognition of the economy mood of Congress, this sum was five hundred million dollars less than the amount he had planned to request a few months before. Despite this fact, the Senate lopped off more than two hundred million dollars from his modified request before turning the measure over to the tender mercies of the House. By the time the House appropriations subcommittee had finished, more than eight hundred million dollars had been cut from the amount the President requested. It is no wonder that he is fighting back.

IN LARGE PART, we are convinced, Congress has been able to deal so harshly with the President's foreign aid program because of widespread lack of knowledge as to what this bill actually is. The measure is constantly referred to as a "giveaway" program, and many Congressmen are convinced that the public is tired of aid to foreign nations. If economizing is to be carried out, individual Congressmen think, foreign aid is a politically safe area in which to do it.

The editors of this magazine do not share this feeling on foreign aid. We favor more of it, not less. We think economic assistance to underdeveloped nations is an essential part of any program to protect the free nations and to work for world peace. This is a position with which many people obviously disagree. But those who oppose the present foreign aid bill on the grounds that it represents a "hand-out" to other nations are either deceiving the public or are themselves deceived. For the truth is that in the sense in which it is usually understood there is precious little foreign aid in this "foreign aid" bill.

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Mr. Eisenhower has referred to our national system of mutual security arrangements with other countries as a "saving shield for freedom." In keeping with this reasoning, more than half of the amount he requested from Congress in the present foreign aid bill is actually earmarked for military spending, in the shape of arms and defense support for smaller nations. By such spending, the President has pointed out, hundreds of thousands of men have been trained and armed abroad, ready to counter possible Communist attack.

In contrast to the amount slated for military spending, the sum intended for straight economic assistance to underdeveloped nations represents less than one-third of the entire amount requested by the President. It was for this reason that Mr. Eisenhower asked that in the future military spending abroad be separated from "foreign aid" so it could be considered for what it is—a defense item rather than part of a program of economic assistance to foreign nations. This request by the President seems eminently reasonable, yet it has been rejected by Congress. As a result, legislators will still be able to vote against arms and training for nations threatened by Communist aggression under the guise of voting against a "give-away" program.

This is a serious business, involving issues that could have grave consequences for the free world. Arms will never solve the problem of Communism, but they are part of the answer. Communist forces occupy half of Viet Nam, and they are able to draw on nearby Communist China for arms and assistance. Will the men in free Viet Nam receive the arms and support they need to protect their liberty? Will the South Koreans receive modern arms to match the up-to-the-minute equipment the Communists have been pouring into North Korea? Those Congressmen who are engaged in slashing the foreign aid bill are playing a dangerous game.

The basic problem about the foreign aid bill, we are told, is that this and other measures like it have no organized lobby to fight for them. But if we have reached the point that an important element in U. S. foreign policy fails for lack of an organized lobby in Washington, the nation has really fallen on sad days. Under the circumstances, President Eisenhower has no choice but to take his case to the people, as clearly and forcefully as he can. And those who believe in the defense of the free world against Communism must constitute themselves as a vast lobby on behalf of essential measures like this one, now and in the years ahead. Failing this, the price the world may pay for false economy is likely to be a high one.

FEED, FOOD AND FIBER

IF BECAUSE of mechanization the American farm population continues to decline, absolutely as well as proportionately, there are few signs in Washington of declining respect for the farm vote. As recently as '48 it was credited with the unexpected re-election of Mr. Truman. Deference for the farm states is one of the constants in the national crop-support dilemma. Another is that many of the things the farmer has to buy for his home and productive acreages enjoy the protection of our tariffs: without some sort of counterbalancing government support he would be operating at a continual disadvantage.

At another level there is the question of what to do about the huge surpluses themselves, which neither Democratic nor Republican administrations have succeeded in reducing to any material extent. The big surpluses of the late 40's and the 50's go back to the greatly expanded cultivation called for during World War II. Since then technological advances have been so marked that severe droughts, floods and other handicaps have not kept American farmers from producing equal or even vaster amounts on greatly reduced acreages.

This is the picture after a year in which the Department of Agriculture has been unusually successful in shipping surpluses abroad, actually reducing wheat and cotton stocks to some extent. The prospect of repeating the process is not a hopeful one, as Canada and Australia are expected to adopt retaliatory measures to win back their share of the export market and Europe is expecting a more normal crop. The original postwar surplus is the rub: current production and consumption are themselves fairly well in balance. And no one has yet brought forward an economically and politically feasible program for getting these mountains of excess fibers and foodstuffs into the hands of the millions in the world who are ill-clad and hungry.

If the present soil bank system is proving unequal to cutting substantially into our surpluses, few alternatives suggested appear to be more promising. One of the main proposals is to scrap the crop-support system as far as exports are concerned, retaining it only on domestic consumption. But this two-price system would lay this country more open to charges of "dumping" in foreign markets than present export efforts, which are so warmly resented by America's competitors. A marked increase in domestic consumption is advanced as another remedy. More could indeed be done with school lunch programs and to revive the surplus

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food stamp plan. But by themselves these outlets would hardly appear to suffice, even if they could contribute to a gradual absorption of surpluses.

In the background is the continued upsurge of the population of the United States (and other countries). There is a physical limit to our acreages of arable soil and degrees of productivity beyond which increases would be impracticable. The fertility of our soil is still being exhausted on many widely scattered farms. The day appears to be inevitable when even our domestic needs will tax our vast powers of food and fiber production. Those who wrestle with our farm problem would be mistaken to ignore the increase projected for our population for only the next two decades. By then it will be of paramount national importance whether sufficient irrigation and drainage will be operating throughout the arid farmlands of the West, whether enough has been put back into the "black velvet" soils of Illinois and Iowa to sustain their now dwindling but still extraordinary fertility, whether the present diversifying of cultivation and rebuilding of the soils in the amply watered Southeast have been carried through. Conservation and upbuilding of the soil will continue to be essential ingredients, whatever the modifications in our immediate farm program.

THE RIGHT TO TRAVEL

WHEN one hundred and sixty Americans decided to attend the World Youth Festival in Moscow, despite all efforts to discourage them, the State Department might have foreseen that this would lead to further invitations. Enthusiasm spreads, the desire to see the world burns strong in youthful hearts and the attractions of a mysterious land visited by but few of one's compatriots tend to be overpowering. The first mistake would therefore seem to be a failure to perceive that the invitation from Communist China would be forthcoming. The second was in the later handling of the case. Once the delegates were remotely off in Moscow, the State Department was hardly in a position to do more than intimate to them that the visit to Peiping would be inimical to our national interest. To have threatened punishment was to make too much of the issue without actually being able to prevent the group from going.

Mishandling is one aspect of the matter, the rights involved another. To begin with, there is a sharp difference from the case of the American newspapermen who were invited by Peiping before. There would hardly be any comparison between the two groups when it comes to producing reliable information for the benefit of the American people. Where it would be an advantage for experienced reporters to see for themselves (and describe) how things were developing in China, it could easily be the reverse for this group of young people—some of whom are said to be well-disposed to begin with. Totalitarian officials have perfected the technique of exposing the foreign visitor only to those developments they want him to see. And the Americans' acceptance of the invitation and appearance in Peiping assuredly constitute a minor propaganda triumph for the Communists.

The "right to travel" to which some of the voyagers have alluded would be a limited "right" at best. There is little objection when it is interfered with in time of outright war. It is also often temporarily abrogated when there are domestic disasters such as those which result from storm and flood. There is nothing so sacrosanct about it that this "right" cannot appropriately be denied in a situation which has some bearing on defense of the free world.

CIVIL RIGHTS CONFUSION

THE CONGRESSIONAL battle over civil rights may soon be over, with the Eighty-fifth Congress concluding this session by the achievement of a historically momentous bill to guarantee the voting rights of Negroes. If the bill goes through, its final form is likely to be a version with the Senate's limitation of the prerogatives granted the Attorney General by the controversial Section Three standing as is, and its requirement of jury trials in criminal but not civil contempt cases arising from the violation of Federal injunctions being narrowed down by the House to apply only to contempt cases concerning voting rights. We think such a bill would be a good one, if not the best, as do representatives of the N.A.A.C.P., the A.F.L.-C.I.O., and other organizations interested in civil rights.

What the leaders of both parties, in and out of Congress, think of the bill is not so easy to determine, inasmuch as their true opinions can have had little relation to their conflicting public pronouncements and their immensely complicated maneuvers in Congress. For the fight over the civil rights legislation in Congress has been marked throughout by highly devious, furious politicking. To follow the daily machinations in Congress these last weeks has been to receive a political education

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in miniature. Seldom has there been a clearer demonstration of "politics in action"—a confusion of principles, expedients, parliamentary strategems and propaganda displays.

The most recent reversals of party positions have had almost nothing to do with the legislation itself. They were adopted in quite open concern with the question of who would reap the political advantage from the fact of civil rights legislation. The Administration was ready, or at least claimed to be ready, to see the existing bill scuttled altogether rather than accept the Senate and House modifications. This "all or nothing" denunciation of the Congressional amendments was in strange contrast to the Administration's previous willingness to accept the compromises and—intended as it was to establish the Republican Party as the uncompromising champion of Negro rights and to carry the issue over into 1958—indicated a cynical disregard of the need and worth of the proffered bill.

The Southern Democrats who had condemned the bill in bitterest terms as "going too far" are now more than willing to accept it, partly because the bill they might have to accept in 1958 might be even stronger, but also, although contradictorily, to win credit for the Democratic Party and this Democratic Congress for the present bill.

The liberals, who decried in strongest terms any weakening of the original bill, are now rallying to support the amended version, say it is a very good piece of legislation, and deplore Republican "extremism."

As might be expected, neither party revealed a monopoly on political opportunism. Both demonstrated their willingness to bluff, dissemble and compromise to achieve the first purpose of every "practical" politician—very simply, to get elected.

THE REUTHER PROPOSAL

EVEN THE AUTOMOBILE manufacturers, who are unlikely to find any gain for themselves in his newest proposal, must stand in admiration, perhaps envy, of the genius of Walter Reuther. Not only is Mr. Reuther an extraordinarily able administrator and trail-blazer in his role as president of the United Auto Workers, but he is amazingly proficient in the subtle art of what might be called labor-management diplomacy.

Mr. Reuther has written to the automotive industry's Big Three—General Motors, Chrysler and Ford—suggesting that the industry reduce its prices for 1958 cars by an average of one hundred dollars a car, in order to check "the growing problem of inflation." If the companies did this, the union in turn would "give full consideration to the effect of such reduction on your corporation's financial position."

The one hundred dollars price reduction on the 1958 models will, according to Mr. Reuther's arithmetic, raise sales and profits and ultimately mean more money for everybody, in addition to combating inflation. The Reuther plan is marvelously simple and appealing, too marvelously simple to be feasible, although there is much in it to merit serious consideration. But aside from this, for Mr. Reuther to have conceived this scheme and placed it before the public at this time indicates once more how fortunate the Auto Workers are to have him at their head. Mr. Reuther has managed to kill several birds with one stone.

At a time when unions and union leaders are being represented to the public by the dismal parade of union racketeers before the Senate Committee now investigating union crime and corruption, Mr. Reuther has called attention to the responsibility and dedication to be found in unions like his. He has taken up an issue which is deeply troubling all Americans—inflation—and put it on record that the U.A.W. places the interests of the nation at large ahead of the interests of its own members only. He has committed the union to nothing in the contract bargaining which will come up in 1958, but by his challenge to reduce prices, at the least not to raise them, he has put industry spokesmen on the defensive already. His revolutionary proposal, which would make available to the union the long-coveted financial records of the industry and give it a place at management's highest planning councils, has been presented in the mildest and most sweetly reasonable terms.

How his latest suggestion would affect the shorter work week he has recently been speaking of is not touched on in his letter to the automobile companies. The companies were already occupied with that hot potato, and now Mr. Reuther has handed them another one.

In his letter, Mr. Reuther called for "a dramatic and electrifying step" in solving labor-management problems. Both qualities are abundantly supplied by his collaboration-for-the-general-good proposal. Interested as we are in the questions involved here, appreciating as we do the public relations overtones of the whole affair, we can hardly wait to read the replies Mr. Reuther will get from the automobile makers.

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God of the Philosophers

"THERE IS A FALSE GOD OF THE PHILOSOPHERS, AND YET ALSO A TRUE PHILOSOPHY OF GOD"

JEAN DANIELOU

THE GOD OF the philosophers is one of the signs of the contradictory nature of religious thought. Christian theology, from St. Thomas Aquinas to the Vatican Council, has always maintained the possibility of a rational knowledge of the existence and attributes of God; and this remains a principle of Catholic thinking. But even in the heart of Christianity another current has never ceased to pulsate—that which regards the God of reason as a stumbling-block, to whom the God of faith is opposed. Thus Pascal speaks of "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not the God of philosophers and scholars"; thus Kierkegaard, for whom reason leads to despair, and despair to faith; thus Chestov, contrasting Job, the Christian philosopher, with Socrates, the wise man after the flesh; thus Barth, denouncing the God of the philosophers, in whom the spirit of man is reflected, as the supreme idol.

My plan here is not to inquire whether in the order of existence philosophy has ever led man to God, for this is a fictitious problem. Conversion to God is always a development of the whole man; and since the order in which we find ourselves historically is an order of grace and sin, the real progress of man is not a progress of pure reason. My purpose here is different. I set myself within this real order, which is in fact an order of grace, within the history of salvation. I ask myself what is the status of philosophy within a theological perspective, just as I have asked this question about religion. And as with the God of the religions, I shall attempt to prove that there is a good and bad use of philosophy, that there is a false God of the philosophers, and yet also a true philosophy of God.

Before studying the means by which philosophy may approach the knowledge of God, we must first deal with the legitimacy of such a practice, for this is what is now in question. Its legitimacy is challenged from widely differing motives. For some, reason, being fundamentally corrupted on account of original sin, is incapable of attaining to truth. For others, God being in essence beyond the capture of the human mind, all claim on the part of this mind to know Him cannot be other than illusory. Some are struck by the contradictions among the philosophers, and think that it is dangerous on this account to put their faith in God on rational grounds. Positivist minds, trained in scientific disciplines, are disconcerted by the trend of metaphysics, in which they fail to find their criteria of certainty and take refuge in religious experience.

ALL THESE objections contain something valuable, and rightly warn us against any blind confidence in reason. The encyclical *Humani Generis*, while endorsing the possibility that reason may arrive at the knowledge of God, recognizes that man in fact attains it with difficulty unless he has the support of grace. Moreover, it is true that the ancient philosophers never reached any but imperfect and conflicting notions of God, and that reason has not been able to gain right knowledge of Him except with the help of revelation. This is the meaning that Gilson rightly gives to the idea of Christian philosophy. It is still more true that the living God cannot be circumscribed by the intellect, and that a God who was entirely intelligible to man would surely not be the true God. Finally it is true that metaphysical certainties belong to another order than mathematical certainties, and that the same criteria of evidence cannot be applied to both.

But all the same, do the limitations of reason justify us in depreciating it? Many men of our time contrast it with personal religious experience. Certainly it is a fact that the knowledge of the true God always implies a personal encounter and an inward conversion. But first of all, religious experience is pre-eminently subjective. The certainty to which it attains is incommunicable. One is tempted to conclude, then, that the knowledge of God is the expression of an instinct connected with man's psychological structure. There will be religious and nonreligious temperaments; belief in God will be regarded as the expression of an inner need, the projection of a thirst for happiness which cannot be satisfied by any created thing.

There is no need to emphasize the danger of such

Father Jean Danielou, S.J., the eminent French theologian, is an editor of *Etudes*. This is a section from *God and the Ways of Knowing*, to be published in October by Meridian Books.

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an outlook. It justifies the frequent taunt of non-believers who hold that belief in God is prompted by the need for security, inward comfort and consolation. To this we must reply that belief in God has nothing to do with the religious instinct. It is objectively imposed alike on the mystical and the positive temperament. But far from admitting that the harmony between God's existence and our affective desires is a criterion of His existence, we must state on the contrary that God's reality is imposed on us far more in an objective manner, in that He contradicts our desires, in that His reality disconcerts our intellect and His will upsets our plans, in that we are compelled to recognize Him, in some sense against our will.

ON THE other hand, if it is true that the encounter with God is a personal event, it is no less true that this event needs afterwards to be controlled and placed within the scheme of things. It is never a development of pure reason, but it must always be subsequently submitted to criticism and sifted by reason. It is only then that I can make certain that I am not the plaything of an illusion, that I am not being carried away by an affective impulse. Only a belief in God which has thus been tested by reason and found solid, which has been brought into relation with the other data and acknowledged to be consistent with them, carries real weight and assures us that our conviction has a sound basis.

Just as reason is necessary to the establishment of the knowledge of God, so is it necessary in exercising this knowledge. Nothing is more dangerous than a religion that claims to have outdistanced reason; it can only lead to fanaticism, illuminism, obscurantism; it is lost in a jungle of superstition. Above all, it runs the risk of being an idle solution. Recourse to the supernatural easily turns into an escapist's paradise. It claims to find mystery where there may only be ignorance, and thus to justify the positivist critic for whom religion corresponds to a prescientific stage of thought. But the true religious mystery is quite different; it is concerned with what cannot be explained in any other way. Yet there is a danger of mixing up the two regions. The function of scientific criticism is precisely that of clearing up this confusion.

If rationalism, and that pride of the mind which claims to possess God and deal with Him, are a serious danger, how noble, on the other hand, are the courageous efforts of the intellect which in respect for mystery never renounces its determination to understand, which goes on to the limit of its capacity and never halts until it is conquered by the overwhelming pressure of a blinding light! This boldness of the intellect in exploring the mystery is the quality on which the imperishable greatness of St. Thomas Aquinas rests. It implies a difficult equilibrium, seldom realized, between the abyss of rationalism and that of fideism. But it is doubtless this perfectly balanced equilibrium which the instinct of the Church acknowledged when she proclaimed him as the supreme theologian.

This is particularly relevant to the very problem we are discussing. For none has shown better than he, both the limitations and the value of the rational knowledge of God. First, as to the limitations: until his time Christian philosophers, especially St. Augustine, more or less yielded to the temptation presented by Platonism, of seeing in the divine the proper object of the intellect, obscured only by its immersion in the flesh. St. Thomas had the courage to break entirely with this tendency, and to refuse to admit that we could form for ourselves any sound or intelligible notion of God, since our concepts are always abstracted from the sensible world. He thus reaffirmed the view of Gregory of Nyssa whom, however, he scarcely knew. Christian tradition gave him good reason to reject any kind of ontologism, and to deny that there could be any natural intuition of God.

THUS REASON can never approach God except mediately, insofar as His existence is postulated by the contingency of what it does not attain. Reason can affirm existence and transcendence. But, as Gilson well says in his summary of St. Thomas' thought: "Once this is said, all that man can say is said. This divine essence, whose existence he assumes, is not penetrated by his intellect, and we know that of himself he will never reach it. Denys is right in saying that the God towards whom our reason strives is still, so to speak, an unknown God. For we know well that He is, and what He is not. But what He is remains for us entirely unknown." In other words, reason can know God—and that is her supreme greatness; but she can know Him only from outside, and that is her infinite limitation. Reason is compelled to affirm Him in order to remain faithful to herself; and by this very affirmation reason recognizes her limits.

But this is at the same time a courageous affirmation of the power of reason. For if the knowledge that she has of God is never adequate, it is none the less perfectly real. There is no trace in St. Thomas of skepticism or agnosticism. In fact, reason has a secure knowledge of God's existence. The latter, as necessary cause, is implied in the existence of contingent being; as absolute truth, it is presupposed by the very exercise of the intellect; as perfect good, it is postulated by the existence of morality. Not only does reason know His existence, but she can form for herself some idea of Him, insofar as He participates in contingent being, and insofar as all the perfections of the latter are a defective, but real, image of His infinite perfection.

We must go further still. Imperfect as it is, the

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created spirit still has a capacity to become all things. If its proper object is created being, it remains true that no created being exhausts its possibilities. It is thus a frontier between two worlds, as St. Thomas admirably describes it. The created spirit lies on the far side of all determinate beings, and yet remains on the near side of that Being Who transcends all determinacy. Thus, if it cannot directly grasp Him, there is yet in it an instinct to grasp Him, the "natural desire" of that real, though ineffective, vision which the grace of God could bring to perfection by communicating to it, through grace, a mysterious share in the divine Being.

SUCH IS the admirable manner in which St. Thomas defines the status of reason in the sphere of the knowledge of God. By presenting at the same time in a rigorous fashion the value and the limitations of the rational knowledge of God, he reveals the paradox of the philosophical quest. For God is at the same time its object and its boundary, its supreme end and its question-mark. The goal of philosophy is to prove His existence, but she can only do this by acknowledging her powerlessness. In that she refuses to make this confession of her limitations, in that she yields to the Platonist temptation, the God whom she arrives at is not the true God. In fact, it is clear that, as Gregory of Nyssa says, "God being beyond all determinacy, he who thinks that God is something determinate deceives himself when he believes that what he knows is God." Thus the problem of God reveals the inward contradiction of philosophy; and it is here that at the same time He justifies her and defines her position.

But it is precisely this position, which constitutes the status of philosophy in the Christian scheme of things, that the majority of philosophers refuse to accept. Philosophy seems to them to lose its significance if it lacks a complete grasp of the intelligibility of being, if it is not supreme knowledge. They do not resign themselves to having to acknowledge a principle which is not perfectly intelligible to them. It is this perfect intelligibility that they call by the name of God; and it is this false God of the philosophers that we may justly oppose to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But this deity is not the God of reason, but the idol of rationalism.

Let us be more precise. The requirement of philosophy is a requirement of intelligibility. Confronted by the apparent disorder of things, the philosophical mind seeks to establish order, to build up sequences, to demonstrate a chain of causes. Beyond concrete realities, it seeks to disclose the very structure of being itself. In this search for being, it desires to arrive at the first principle, that is at once the cause, the pattern, the end of all that is. This principle is called God. The philosophical quest comes necessarily to the problem of God, which is in reality the only one that concerns it.

SUMMER READING

Memories of the Thirties

JOHN C. CORT

AS I REMEMBER New York, summer there is a time when life goes on pretty much as usual, except that you act it out as in an oven roasting. Of course you plan and save your money to get away for two or three weeks to some place as remote from and unlike New York as possible. But otherwise all the organizations go on having their regular monthly meetings and all the millions who find themselves trapped in the great city sweat it out going through the usual routine.

In Boston, on the contrary, everything stops for the summer. Maybe it's because New England is "vacationland," or maybe it's because the North and South Shores and their white beaches lie so close, but whatever the reason it is understood that no proper or improper Bostonian is going to hold a meeting on any serious subject between July 4th and Labor Day.

Perhaps it is a symptom of advancing years and waning zeal, but I find this custom of the summer hiatus strangely attractive. Summer is a time that brings out the lotus-eater in all of us; we glimpse a vision of an effortless life of joy which is really not possible here but only hereafter. Even so, bring on your pleasure boats and the salt spray flying, bring on your summer theater and the cool Shakespeare under the moon, bring on your porch hammock, a jug of beer and thou beside me speaking of this and that. Or failing thou, a good book will do.

Reading on the porch is a basic summer pleasure. I don't know about you, but it seems as though sum-

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mer on the porch is almost the last time and place I can find to read a book. And so I found myself recently, reading Murray Kempton's *Part of Our Time: Some Monuments and Ruins of the Thirties,* which Simon and Schuster brought out a couple of years ago.

Kempton I remember from the forties in New York when he was working for Victor Riesel and used to call the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists looking for scraps of printable labor news. He succeeded Riesel as labor columnist for the New York *Post,* and has since been turning out the most readable labor reporting anywhere in the country, if not in the world.

Kempton was pretty young during the thirties and his most vivid personal recollections of that time are of the Young Communist League and the Yipsels (Young Peoples Socialist League) at Johns Hopkins University. But since then he has had plenty of opportunity to study at first hand some of the heroes and villains of that decade whom he writes of in this book: John L. Lewis and Walter Reuther, Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers, Edmund Wilson and James T. Farrell, Mary Heaton Vorse and Elizabeth Bentley, Paul Robeson and A. Philip Randolph, Joe Curran, J. B. Matthews, Philip Murray, Clifford Odets, Lee Pressman, and a score of others. The publisher's blurb describes it: "Concerning some of the men and women who were active in the 'Red Decade' in the U.S. Some of them radicals, most of them Communists; how they felt in those days and their gain or loss from an experience intense and passionate, which changed their lives profoundly." And changed our lives more than a little.

WHO WAS IT that described lyric poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility"? I thought of this in reading Kempton, who has some of the gifts of the poet but more accuracy.

At any rate the passion of the thirties is all there, or nearly all. As, for example, the immortal words of John L. Lewis to K. T. Keller, vice-president of Chrysler, at the turning-point of the sit-down strike of 1937: "I am ninety-nine per cent of a mind to come around this table right now and wipe that damn sneer off your face."

Or the outcry, during the GM sit-down, of Joe Sayen, "a Chevrolet Four worker thereafter unheard upon any great stage again, (who) climbed the spiked fence outside Chevrolet and told the pickets that the bastions had fallen:

" 'We want the whole world to know what we are fighting for. We are fighting for freedom and life and liberty. This is our great opportunity. What if we should be defeated? What if we should be killed? We have only one life. That is all we can lose and we might as well die like heroes than like slaves.' "

It is hard to remember now what life in America was like during the sit-down strikes twenty years ago. "You'd be sitting in the office any March day in 1937," Kempton quotes one union organizer, "and the phone would ring and the voice at the other end would say, 'My name is Mary Jones; I'm a soda clerk at Liggett's; we've thrown the manager out and we've got the keys. What do we do now?' And you'd hurry over to the company to negotiate and over there they'd say, 'I think it's the height of irresponsibility to call a strike before you've even asked us for a contract,' and all you could answer was, 'You're so right.' "

There is much more here than the sit-down strikes. Kempton is a pretty literary fellow and a pretty deep fellow and he is concerned with the radical of the thirties in every field: labor, literature, Hollywood, government, race relations, etc.

It isn't his racket and maybe we should not expect it of him, but it strikes me that there is a chapter missing in his book, or a couple of paragraphs anyway, and they would be on the Catholic radicals of the thirties. Dorothy Day is at least of equal stature to any of Kempton's characters, a darn sight more attractive than most of them, and just as good copy.

Another weakness in the book, I think, is the excessive tone of apology for the radicalism of the thirties. Of course some of the characters here mentioned did not lend themselves to very much but apology. And Kempton is right when he speaks of their Marxist faith as built upon "a myth," but his definition of the myth leaves something to be desired.

He says, "Most of all it was a social myth. No man was an island. He could not escape history. If Madrid fell, he fell with it. In his own time, he would know the night of defeat or the morning of final victory. The instruments of his salvation were his to command. The language of the myth was abstract and collective. Its key words were symbols like 'labor,' 'people,' 'youth,' and 'history.' . . . The heart of the myth of the thirties was that there were no neutrals."

That last line sounds a little like the Lord's words: "I would that thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit thee out of My mouth." Hemingway's dictum

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that we are all part of the main was not coined in the thirties but by John Donne in the 17th century out of the Primeval wisdom on the reverse side of Cain's "Am I my brother's keeper?"

It almost seems as though Kempton were casting out, along with the illusions of the thirties, a great deal of its honest idealism and indignation at man's inhumanity to man. After all, there really were fourteen million unemployed in 1933, give or take a few. People were really starving in a land of plenty. And Fascism really was a menace.

So was Communism, and this was a menace to which Kempton's cast of characters, some of them, were strangely myopic. But even so, let us not belittle all of their activity or all of their preoccupations. I know some eminently respectable priests and bishops who shared part of them.

The myth of the thirties, if I may be allowed a try at it, was the belief that you could effectively love man, that you could effectively love justice, without loving the God Who gives man and justice, and love, their meaning. And secondarily, that it followed from the abuse of private property that property should be made public.

ALTHOUGH he starts the book as a somewhat tired cynic, Kempton is too wise an idealist himself to end it that way. In an eloquent peroration he invokes the ghost of "a radical in America whose tradition was defeat and whose end was community. His was a voice almost stilled among the radicals of the thirties; and now, at a time when the radicals of the thirties have been driven to cover or recantation or dreadful isolation, we listen for his voice again. He was the radical who dared to stand alone, to whom no man called out in vain, to whom the lie was dishonorable and the crawl degrading. He would, I think, have found it in himself to pity Matthews, Chambers, Pressman, and Hiss alike because there would have been a part of each of them in him. I think of him as perhaps like Sam Levinger, who is dead in a grave which is either unmarked or desecrated in Franco's Spain and who wrote before he died:

Comrades, the battle is bloody and the war is long,
Still let us climb the gray hills and charge the guns.

"Those are tired words, and they have absorbed all the agony which is the truth of life. They are resigned but they are undefeated. They do not suggest that somebody else charge the guns. They know the worst, but they will make the charge themselves. I miss them very much and I wish we had them back." End of book.

One of the few things about New York that I miss very much, and wish I had back, is the opportunity to read Kempton's column in the N.Y. *Post*. For this is indeed a gifted man. If, like myself, you don't have that opportunity, read "Part of Our Time." It contains not only a lot of sharp and eloquent social commentary on one of the most crucial decades of our century, but also some of the best and most readable labor history since Louis Adamic's *Dynamite*. There may be just enough of the summer left to finish it.

I cannot resist borrowing still another observation. Somewhere, I can't find the quote, he speaks of the young men who nowadays come to him looking for a nice, interesting job in the labor movement, preferably in the research or education department of some big, well-heeled union. I have a stack of letters from the same type.

And he compares these young men to the man who didn't want to help build the cathedral; he just wanted to be a sexton in the finished building. One of the most depressing things about the fifties is this same young man still looking to have his cake and eat it too, still figuring to hitch his wagon to some prosperous star, still dreaming of a well-paid career in the service of his fellowman.

I suppose that those of us who were young in the thirties would have been the same way if there had been any possibility of working it out. But that was one of the nice things about the thirties: they were so bad that there just wasn't any place to start except at the bottom.

THE EXILE

An Imitation

When I am ill, birds fly
To their nests.
Sparrow-hawks hover
Over the city
Spying out sparrows.

When I kiss in the dark
There is trouble in the house.
Old men lean like envious sticks
In a corner.

The friends that I once had
Live in a distant city.
When I am ill,
There is no one to pour water.

A bad time.
A bad time for birds;
A bad time for kisses.

A sparrow-hawk breaks from its nest
And scatters the sparrows.

LEONARD WOLF.

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MAGIC WORDS

ON THE FASHIONABLE North Shore of Long Island there is a horse named Domino who likes to bathe frequently. Domino's owners have been in the habit of taking him to a local beach for frequent dips on these hot summer days. But neighbors have begun to complain; they want to keep Long Island Sound exclusive—for people and fish only. However, Domino's owners will have none of it. They are standing on the horse's rights, they say; they will not deprive him of his lovely baths in order to satisfy the human pride and prejudices of their neighbors.

Domino is fortunate enough to have a master who is a lawyer and is not afraid to defend a horse. In stating the case for Domino, the owner laid it right on the line: "Animals," he said, "are entitled to similar freedoms that are assured in the Bill of Rights to humans."

The Long Island lawyer's ungrammatical pronunciamento appeared in the New York *Times* the same day that Howard Rushmore, a former editor of *Confidential,* was quoted as saying on the witness stand that he did his chores for the scandal magazine because he wanted to hurt Communists and those who help Communists.

There is no other connection between these two items except that they point up the frightful, and frightening, decay of political thinking in the United States. A respectable member of the Bar who attributes political rights to domestic animals, a member of the Fourth Estate who traffics in exposé dirt in order to serve democracy: what are we coming to?

It is easy enough to make jokes about our four-footed friends enjoying freedom of speech, association and assembly. Even a dullard can think of a few. And I suppose it would also be easy to dream up some witticisms about *Confidential* agents. If I had the space I might try. But neither case is really funny. They are both as sad as those bright little invitations AWARE, Inc. used to summon patriots to "Cocktails Against Communism." The one shows how damaged the philosophy undergirding our Constitution can become. The other indicates that even the nation's present struggle for the mind of free men can be sloganized into a kind of self-idolatry.

Until the establishment of Israel, the United States was probably the only country in the world founded on an idea. America did not just happen or even evolve over many years like most countries; it was founded. The founding fathers were philosophers as well as men of affairs. They had clear convictions about man and his dignity. They had a highly developed notion of political freedom. Their notion of freedom was derived from their conviction about human dignity.

But the founders of America lived a long time ago, and it seems now that Americans have stopped philosophizing. When even a lawyer will attribute "rights" to animals and equate these "rights" to the human rights protected by the Constitution, that much at least is clear. At best, the ideas of the founding fathers have grown dim; at worst, they have been corrupted by sentimentality.

What has happened to the notion of man's unique dignity found in our basic doctrines? How firm is the general understanding of man's inalienable rights when even leaders of the community reduce them to comparison with the "rights" of dumb animals? How much hold do the majestic strictures and sanctities of the Constitution have on minds willing to invoke them in support of a swimming horse?

If the "public philosophy" has come to such a pass as this, is it any wonder that the Supreme Court is under fire? Should it be surprising that even highly placed columnists and editorial writers speak as if our legal system has been devised to insure convictions rather than to promote justice?

Communism offers a complete challenge not only to America's peace and security but to the ideas the founding fathers enshrined in the Constitution. It has been said that these founders blended Judaeo-Christian teachings and rationalist insights to shape the rock upon which this nation was built. Communism threatens the values of both traditions. It is anti-God, anti-man, anti-reason, anti-freedom. It has to be fought with unyielding intelligence and resolve.

But what does the fight against Communism and the defense of freedom have to do with the boudoir-peeping, call-girl informing, kiss-and-tell treachery of scandal magazines? What utter confusion must exist when a writer recognized as an anti-Communist expert even by committees of Congress finds the sewers of *Confidential* a suitable channel for America's truth.

I am willing to credit this writer with utterly patriotic intentions. I am willing to take his word that he wanted above all to serve his country and the cause of freedom. But I think I would hold his judgment in higher esteem if he just wanted to make a fast buck.

This, though, is not a matter of personalities, as the President might say. The point here is that the lawyer who wanted to persuade the public that his horse should not be deprived of its sea bath invoked the Bill of Rights; the newspaperman who wanted to justify a scandal-mongering career invoked anti-Communism. Apparently they thought they could win general support that way. And maybe they can.

JOHN COGLEY.

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THE STAGE

THE IMAGE AND THE SEARCH

IT IS THE ironic virtue of "A Moon for the Misbegotten" to remind us of the claims not only of piety, but of art. Eugene O'Neill's last play arrived at a salutary moment: having done this season past, with that generosity which is ever an American grace, justice and homage to a most considerable figure in our literature, the tide of feeling runs high. It will not be swelled by this work; one hopes, indeed, some movement of control may set in. For "A Moon for the Misbegotten," hoary, ruminant, immutable yet baggy with total recall, full of a sucking guilt and reddened with whiskey, as Miss Mary McCarthy observed, like a bloodshot eye, invites not so much response as endurance. It is built of private obsessions which, unlike those of "Long Day's Journey into Night," stubbornly refuse to take a public investiture, and inundated by its weary factuality, I reflected that Gertrude Stein must have had reference to something like this when she observed that anecdotes are not literature. Even the mesmeric midnight scene, which gathers one irresistibly into its moist claw of remorse, seems to me inadvertently, if at all, to enter the kingdom of art: it inhabits rather a climate of moral pathology, and I resign happily to the theologian the task of charting that weather.

The O'Neill Problem: one adds it to the James problem, the Dreiser problem, the Melville problem, the problems of Poe, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Mrs. Wharton: it would seem that only in the public thoroughfare of their diverse stresses do American writers meet and touch. The O'Neill problem *vis-a-vis* "A Moon for the Misbegotten" is centrally one of language and form. Insensibility to the first—to its luster or resistance, shimmer or weightiness—harassed O'Neill all his days: the durable images of his work are either visual, or the achievement of some intolerable personal pressure; his attempts to realize them in language are muddy and clotted. Even the "Long Day's Journey," which forges out of domestic speech a kind of tragic poetry of remembrance and loss—even here some excess might be rinsed away, the whole moulded to a richer expressiveness and finality.

In "A Moon for the Misbegotten," this insensibility expands into the larger indifference to anything like selection. One's mouth, ears, nostrils are crammed, not with the intense, the difficult or abstract, but rather with an aimless and literal redundancy. The sense persists that to the later O'Neill, the reality of language and form deteriorated: he saw them only as part of the tedious machinery of making the spirit manifest. Indeed, the Manichean burden of "A Moon for the Misbegotten," is embodied in its form, for we have here not so much a play, as a piece of drama, dominated not by an aesthetic tone or a vision of reality (however meager), but by an *image*: that of the withered husk of a sensualist, and the randy, yearning virago uniting to deny the reality of physical love and the flesh, and finally of matter itself.

This scene, rising like a gutted moon over what has gone before, is of uncommon power and quality: raddled with private tension, it is able to exact what Mr. Lionel Trilling, in a subtle discrimination, has called acquiescence without assent. However decisively one rejects its lamentable psychology and perverse values, the want of intelligence it flaunts—its lordly indifference to the testimony of common experience—the thing has nonetheless romantic authority and a terrible truth. For it brings to light the fantasy world of a kind of Irish-American Catholicism by which we have all been fingered. Such a scene, I might add, could be written only by a lapsed Irish-American Catholic, and whatever its dubious worth as art, as a document of contemporary experience it could not be more relevant.

Its critical significance is to dramatize inescapably O'Neill's failure to acquit what Mr. Eliot has called the central task of the poetic dramatist—the devising of a form to arrest the flow of spirit. My designation of O'Neill as poetic dramatist may surprise, but it is obvious that these later plays may be said only peripherally to fall within the tradition of realism: their real animation is metaphysical horror, and their real passion the attempt to register that in all its shock. Yet the Manichean heresy is intolerable to literature as it is to theology: within the terms of art, spirit cannot exist without embodiment. It seeks ever the conditions of form, and the impatience of O'Neill's later plays with this necessary search—their solipsistic obsession with the undifferentiated image—may mark the limits of his art. One is indeed curious to know what later generations may make of these works, when all their paraphernalia of contemporary reference is sloughed off, and they stand only by the inarticulate, shuddering authority of their pain.

Mr. Carmen Capalbo's production of "A Moon for the Misbegotten" is the sketch of a work in progress, the tribute of a devoted amateur, in which one may question not the homage but the want of finish and aesthetic awareness. The theatre of O'Neill is so patchy and eclectic and void of anything like a dominant style, that it can be made to "work" only by the organization of personal obsession: varieties of realism, however individually effective, can bring it only to chaos. Nothing like this unity binds Mr. Capalbo's production into coherence: Mr. Cyril Cusack plays with a garrulous, Abbey Theatre amiability which is doubtless authentic, but which dwindles into the unintelligible, and Mr. Franchot Tone with a wry, soiled

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elegance, always admirably taut. Mr. Tone "projects," as one says, with unfailing authority, yet the role runs cross-grained to his sensibility, and I could not feel him happy in it. Miss Wendy Hiller is the somewhat tarnished Demeter of O'Neill's vulnerable conception, and her performance, into which has gone much personal resource, baffles nonetheless by its shifts in style. Miss Hiller is at first the raffish tartar we have known on so many Tobacco Roads; she later dilates this quality, with a lovely jet of feeling, into the vital tenderness and obliteration of the midnight scene. Her closing moments strain, a trifle visibly, after the enclosed peace and acquiescence of a conventional tragic poise. This fluctuation would seem to be Miss Hiller's response to the impossible components of the role, and it may be said of her approach that she sometimes makes them possible; often, too, she sounds a note of resonant pathos. One regrets only that the part permits no scope to the quality of luminous, energetic intelligence which is such a feature of Miss Hiller's distinction.

Two highly pertinent commentaries on the published version of "A Moon for the Misbegotten" have been written by Miss Mary McCarthy (in *Sights and Spectacles*) and Mr. Eric Bentley (in *The Dramatic Event*).

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

WILL SUCCESS ROCK THE SPOILERS?

IN "WILL Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" Jayne Mansefield plays a modern *femme fatale*, one of Hollywood's busty, blond babes who is not half as dumb as she pretends and who expects her next movie to be about several Russian brothers. Miss Mansefield's caricature of the type is not only devastating but also crystal clear: the type caricatures itself and is to be considered neither serious nor dangerous. Of course Rita Marlowe, as played by Miss Mansefield, is nothing for children but onces she captures Rock Hunter, the advertising agency copywriter who wants Rita to endorse Stay-Put Lipstick, it becomes obvious that Rita is just another of the film's jokes—and a very funny, well-played one too.

The screen version of "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" is only vaguely based on George Axelrod's stage play. Now it is the brain child and concoction of Producer-director-writer Frank Tashlin, who retained the role of Rita Marlowe from Axelrod's play but rewrote practically everything else into a lampoon on advertising agencies, movies, TV (both shows and commercials) and on business success in general. Although he has written a hilariously funny script that goes to town in razzing the Madison Avenue boys, Tashlin's cleverest move was in casting Tony Randall as the zany and hard-working copywriter in the classy agency where having a key to the executives' washroom is more important than the high salary. Randall gives a slick, brilliant portrayal of the little man who rises to the top—but *still* can't keep a pipe lighted, and who almost loses his true love (Betsy Drake) in pretending to be the new lover-boy in the life of the famous and publicity-mad Rita Marlowe. "Will Success" doesn't depend too much on plot, which is a kind of scatter-brained thing and is helped along by Joan Blondell, John Williams, Mickey Hargitay and others. It relies on Randall's delightful sense of absurdity, on Tashlin's well-paced direction and on Tashlin's almost continuous stream of wisecracks and parodies, some of which exceed good taste in trying to be risque.

RITA HAYWORTH plays a *femme fatale* in her new picture too, but world-weary and very tired from being handed from man to man; she's now a woman of mystery and little reputation. She has less of both by the time "Fire Down Below" comes to its finale. Before that, however, stranded in Puerto Rico since she has no passport or papers, she hires a couple of smugglers to get her to a vague island named Santa Nada. It is soon obvious that the more worldly of these two men (Robert Mitchum) looks down his nose at Rita and will have nothing to do with her, but the younger, a somewhat carefree college type (Jack Lemmon) falls for her—with a dead thud. Robert knows Rita's no good, and since his fists can't stop Jack from proposing marriage to her, devoted Mitchum uses more drastic methods.

At times "Fire Down Below" is an unusual and interesting study in realism and cynicism. Some of Irwin Shaw's script is very well written; and the settings, beautifully photographed in CinemaScope and Technicolor in the British West Indies, are stunning. Director Robert Parrish was even able, except in a ridiculous musical-comedy kind of Carnival scene, to make this *femme fatale* look like a tramp at the end of her rope. But the picture as a whole is peculiarly put together. The last third is devoted almost exclusively to Jack Lemmon who is caught in the wreckage of a ship which promises to blow up with its burning cargo. This part of the film is quite exciting, but at the expense of the other characters and the story itself.

MAKING A film out of the life of Lon Chaney no doubt also started out as a good idea. Unfortunately, because of Chaney's unhappy life or what the scriptwriters made of it, "Man of a Thousand Faces"

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has become an almost incredible melodrama. James Cagney plays the lead role exceedingly well—and suffers with dignity as a man with mute parents, an alcoholic wife, a son who is torn between father and mother, and a great career in Hollywood that required painful make-ups and extraordinariy ability. In spite of all the sadness Lon Chaney goes through, and while the movie shows him to be a Hollywood "great," this stubborn man to whom forgiveness came so hard fails to win much sympathy. A good cast supports Cagney throughout: Dorothy Malone as the first and hysterical wife, whom he divorces, Jane Greer as his sympathetic and ever-loving second wife, Marjorie Rambeau as a Hollywood personality who advises Lon well, Robert Evans as young producer Thalberg who steered Chaney's difficult career, and many others including three likable young actors who play Lon Jr., through the years. Soap-opera enthusiasts might like this movie.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

"SPIRIT OF THOMISM"

Winona, Minn.

TO the Editors: The Commonweal did itself credit by providing generous space to announce a significant book event: Gilson's *Le thomisme* appearing in translation as *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas* [Aug. 9]. . . .

Mr. Scharper wonders, however, if Gilson is "not too dogmatic in asserting that the Thomist must necessarily start his philosophy with God and work down to man."

This equivocal declaration could mean that Gilson stands accused of making Thomas begin philosophy with some sort of divine intuition and then undertake to deduce man. However, let us take for granted that Mr. Scharper intends no such misreading as that. What he likely wants to bring out is Gilson's insistence upon a theological order in Thomas's philosophizing. That, for sure, would seem a valid interpretation of Gilson's words, but then we would wonder why Mr. Scharper calls it a flaw—as though it were something unintended, a kind of slip, a mere accidental blemish. For this alleged flaw is one of the most deliberate points that for years Gilson has been trying to get over: Thomas's is a Christian philosophy; his theology is a philosopher's theology and his philosophy is a theologian's.

For well nigh thirty years Gilson has repeated this view through *Christianity and Philosophy, Reason and Revelation, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*. And to his essays and articles on the topic, Gilson will add a new piece to be published in a few weeks. That is, *Image Books* is scoring again in low cost and high quality with none other than *A Gilson Reader,* which will also come out in hard covers. Edited by Dr. Anton Pegis (who supplies as introduction a most warm and knowing appreciation of Gilson's work), the book will present over twenty selections grouped according to leading Gilsonian themes. And under Christian philosophy is an essay written for the occasion. In proclaiming this good tidings to Gilson fans and to non-Gilsonites alike, I could do no better than to repeat Mr. Scharper's words: "Buy, beg, or borrow this book—but by all means read it."

JAMES D. R. EBNER.

Westminster, Md.

TO the Editors: One might almost detect a certain "Cartesian itch for simplicity and clarity" in Mr. Philip Scharper's statement [Aug. 9] that "Ockham reduced theology to faith, and philosophy to logic."

One might also be somewhat distressed at Mr. Scharper's rather unhistorical preoccupation with the rhetorical "what might have been." To say that Luther would never have become the Luther that we know, had he known St. Thomas better, is simply fallacious. It is not that Luther did not know St. Thomas. Even Professor Maritain admits this. Moreover, serious study of the situation leads one to conclude that although Luther revolted against Ockhamism, the nature of his revolt was such that it would have taken place whether Luther had been an Ockhamist, a Scotist, or a Thomist. The reason is that Luther revolted against Scholasticism.

But one must wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Scharper that "an unexamined idea is not worth holding."

EDWARD J. FOYE.

REPLY

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: My reservation (mild enough, to be sure) on the point raised by Mr. Ebner did not center around either M. Gilson's views on the existence and nature of a Christian theology, which I accept, nor the "theological order in Thomas' philosophizing," which is evident.

My remark dealt, not with Thomas, but with the contemporary Thomist. He can begin to philosophize only in the first person, on problems which he has freely selected out of his personal situation, and which he views with a uniquely personal gaze through the perspectives of Thomism. It does not seem impossible that his speculations might follow a philosophical rather than a theological order, although, as M. Gilson indicates, no one has yet successfully effected a complete reconstruction of Thomas' philosophy along those lines.

With regard to Mr. Foye, I can only regret that if

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my remarks on the relation of Ockham to Luther did display a Cartesian itch for simplicity and clarity, it would seem, in his case, to have been contagious.

To say that Luther revolted against scholasticism is somewhat like saying that a man who doesn't eat pork is a vegetarian. It would be more proper, since we are dealing with Thomism and Ockhamism, to use the term "scholasticisms," since there are deep and irreconcilable differences between these two systems of thought. To lump them together under one blanket term is more a matter of historical convenience than of philosophical accuracy.

We need merely cite, in any case, Ockham's acceptance of predestination, purely external justification and the primacy of good works to realize that Luther's revolt was not against Thomism, whether Luther "knew Thomas" or not. I am glad that Mr. Foye can wholeheartedly agree with me on one point, at least, even while he deftly turns it against me. I can only say that the "idea" to which he objects has been examined from different perspectives by such men as Lortz, Hughes, Adam, Gilson and Bouyer, each of whom seems to think it an idea eminently worth holding.

PHILIP SCHARPER.

PAUL VALÉRY

Poet of Contradiction

MARTIN TURNELL

PAUL VALÉRY was born at Sète on the French Mediterranean coast on October 30, 1871 and died in Paris on July 20, 1945, ten days before the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Japan. There is a poetic rightness about both dates. We can see now that the Franco-Prussian War, which culminated in the proclamation from the Palace of Versailles of the monstrous Reich founded on force and fraud, was one of the turning points of history. It was this war which marked the end of the old Europe and led directly to two world wars and to the atomic age. Flaubert was one of the first writers to perceive its significance. "Perhaps," he wrote, "there will be a return to racial wars, and within the next century we shall see millions of men killing one another in a single action. All the East against all the West, the old world against the new."

Valéry did not care for prose fiction, but in spite of his jibe about "St. Flaubert" the two men were really on the same side. If Flaubert was one of the first, Valéry was probably the last of the great Mandarins. He was the exponent of a highly recondite form of art which appeals essentially to a small civilized élite, and which already in the nineteenth century had roused the fury of the industrial middle classes who saw in it a threat to their security and to the business of money-making which was their main interest in life. The seventy-five years which separated Sedan from Hiroshima were the great age of mandarin art. It was the age which gave to Europe symbolism and impressionism, the novels of Proust, Henry James and James Joyce, the poetry of Mallarmé, Rainer Maria Rilke and Valéry.

Ambroise-Paul-Toussaint-Jules Valéry, to give him his full names, was the son of Barthélemy Valéry and Fanny Grassi. His father, who was a civil servant in the Customs and Excise, was of Corsican extraction; his mother was an Italian. There is no doubt that the early years on the Mediterranean coast played a decisive part in Valéry's formation. The Provençal landscape, with its brilliant colors and magnificent light, provided him with a rich store of images—particularly marine images—which are one of the outstanding characteristics of his poetry.

Barthélemy Valéry died in 1877. Seven years later the family moved to Montpellier where Valéry completed his studies. He seems to have been unfortunate in his masters at the local lycée and found no one who was capable of appreciating or encouraging his aesthetic interests. "I have masters," he wrote, "who rule by terror. They have a drill-sergeant's conception of literature. Stupidity and insensibility seem to me to be on the syllabus." It was the first glimpse of that intellectual arrogance which is enshrined in the famous opening sentence of *An Evening with M. Teste*: "Stupidity is not my strong point." He left the lycée in 1888 and registered as a law student at the University of Montpellier. A year later he passed the first part of his baccalaureate in law and began a year's military service as a volunteer. We learn from a letter he wrote to Pierre Louys that though military service proved a disappointing experience, it led to a deepening—a temporary deepening—of his religious fervor.

Mr. Turnell, a regular contributor to this magazine, is the author of *Baudelaire* and *The Novel in France*.

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In 1889 he discovered the poetry of Mallarmé, Rimbaud and Poe thanks to a reading of Huysmans' *A Rebours*, which he described as "my bible, my bedside book." His poems began to appear in the "little reviews" of the day, and he wrote his first literary article. The title was "Some Notes on Literary Technique," the subject Edgar Allan Poe, whom he admired almost as much as Baudelaire had done before him.

WHEN HIS military service ended in November 1890, he returned to the university as a full-time student and completed his baccalaureate in law. He also studied anthropology under Dr. Lapouge. This is a matter of some interest in view of his later study of philosophy, mathematics and natural science which appeared to him to be necessary for the "universal mind" that he admired in Leonardo da Vinci. The most important event of the year, however, was neither the passing of his law examination nor the study of anthropology. It was his first meeting with the man whom for the rest of his life he was to regard not merely as his master, but as the Master. He had written to Mallarmé the previous year, but the two men did not meet until October 1891. He has left a vivid note of the meeting. He arrived at Mallarmé's at nine o'clock in the evening. The door was opened by the Master himself. He was a small man who gave the impression of a peaceful but rather tired-looking bourgeois of forty-six. His eyes were half-closed and he spoke in a low neutral tone. Then, when anything interested him, the face would suddenly light up and become animated with the eyes wide open, the voice strong and firm.

In July 1892 Valéry took his degree in law. A month later, while on a visit to his mother's native city of Genoa, he underwent a strange experience which is usually spoken of as "the Night of Genoa." This is how he described it: "An appalling night—spent on my bed —storms everywhere—my room dazzingly illuminated by every flash of lightning—And my whole fate at stake in my head.—I am between me and myself."

"The Night of Genoa" is sometimes compared to the much more prolonged crisis which Mallarmé experienced as a young man and which is known as "the Nights of Tournon." There appear to be certain similarities between the two experiences, but their immediate effects were very different. They both seem to have been partly religious and partly literary, and they both ended in a loss of religious faith. There can be no doubt, however, that during this very painful and protracted period Mallarmé found himself as a poet and began to formulate the theory of "the Great Work" which was to have been his poetic testament, but which was never finished.

Valéry's experience resulted in the loss not only of religious faith, but of faith in himself as a poet. The story that "the Night of Genoa" inaugurated a "twenty years silence" during which he wrote no poetry is now known to be an exaggeration, but there was certainly a partial abandonment of poetry. He may have gone on writing verse, but it was twenty years before he started work on a major poem and with the exception of two short poems which appeared in 1907, he published no more verse until 1917.

ALL HIS life Valéry was inclined to speak disparagingly of writing and he once declared, in reply to a newspaper enquiry, that he himself only wrote "out of weakness." He may have convinced himself that the very act of writing distracted him from that intellectual contemplation which became a cult with him, but his attitude was not entirely free from affectation. Men do not write because they want to or because they enjoy writing; they write because they are writers. It was because he was a writer that Valéry did not allow the experience of 1892 to affect his interest in writing or writers.

Only two months after "the Night of Genoa," he left the south and settled in Paris where he became the friend of Mallarmé, Huysmans, Hérédia, Degas, Régnier, Mockel and Marcel Schwob. Two years later he accepted an invitation to write an article on Leonardo da Vinci for *La Nouvelle Revue*. It was published as the *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci* which remains one of the most important of his prose works. He also began work on the even more important *Evening with M. Teste* which was published in 1896 in a magazine called *Le Centaure*. In 1897 he followed his father's example by becoming a civil servant, entering first the Ministry of War, then the Ministry of Marine.

MALLARMÉ died in 1898. It is sometimes said that Valéry married his daughter. This is an error. In 1900 he married Jeannie Gobillard, a niece of the Impressionist painter, Berthe Morisot, and a friend of Mallarmé's daughter Geneviève. The marriage took place in May, a month after Valéry's resignation from the civil service. He then became secretary to Édouard Lebey, the founder and director of the Havas Agency, and remained in the post until Lebey's death in 1922.

In 1912 Valéry was pressed by friends who included Gide, Louys and Gaston Gallimard, the publisher, to revise and collect his early poems. The following year he began work on what, with the exception of *Le Cimetière marin*, was to be his most celebrated poem. He originally intended *La Jeune Parque* ("The Young Fate") to be a short poem of some fifty lines. In fact it turned into a work of four hundred fifty lines, and the poet wrote over one hundred drafts before he finally

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arrived at a version which satisfied him. The bulk of the work was done in 1915-16 and the poem was published by Gallimard in 1917 with a dedication to Gide in which Valéry described it, significantly, as an "exercise." Two year later he wrote a further essay on Leonardo which he called "Note and Digression," and which was added to the original essay.

Le Cimetière marin followed in 1920. The same year a collection of his early poems appeared under the title of *Album de vers anciens*. It was followed in 1922 by a second collection called *Charmes*. This, with the exception of some librettos written for Honneger and the *Cantate du Narcisse*, marked the end of his work as a poet. The first of his "dialogues," *The Soul and the Dance*, was published in 1921, *Eupalinos or the Architect* and *Dialogue of the Tree* in 1923 (all included in *Dialogues*, the first volume of the Bollingen Edition of *The Collected Works in English*. Pantheon. $3.). Although the dialogues are greatly admired, the most intriguing of his works to be published in these years were two additions to the Teste saga, the "Letter from Madame Émilie Teste" and "Extracts from the Logbook of Monsieur Teste" in 1924 and 1925.

In spite of his modest output, Valéry was regarded by 1925 as the greatest living French poet—the only other French poet of comparable standing was Claudel—and in that year he succeeded to the chair of Anatole France in the French Academy. Although Valéry had never courted fame, had indeed been inclined to frown on it as a distraction from serious work, he found it thrust upon him. The remaining twenty years of his life were passed in a blaze of glory. Prose works poured from his pen. He lectured all over Europe and was given honorary degrees by many universities. In 1936 he was made President of the League of Nations Committee for Intellectual Co-operation, and a year later a Chair of Poetry was created for him at the Collège de France where he continued to lecture until his resignation in 1944. He was given a State funeral when he died in 1945, and was buried in the marine cemetery at Sète which he had used as the setting for the *Cimetière marin*.

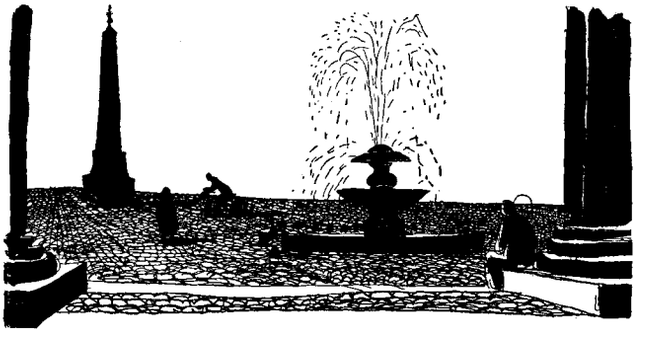
ALTHOUGH Valéry's reputation will rest ultimately on his poetry, his verse accounts for no more than fifteen per cent of his published work and occupies only one volume in the collected editions. The remaining volumes contain a body of prose which ranges from the writings on Leonardo and Teste and the dialogues to a vast assortment of critical essays on poetry and poetic theory, studies of individual writers and the well-known reflections on the contemporary situation called *Regards sur le monde actuel*. Although the prose has been as much admired in some quarters as the poetry, it must be said bluntly that its quality varies considerably. A good deal of the criticism is clearly intended to buttress the poetical work; a good deal more seems to have been designed as a series of mystifying and decidedly irritating conjuring tricks.

Valéry's writings on Leonardo and Teste are related so directly to the poetry that they must be considered as part of his imaginative rather than his critical work. The closeness of the relationship is emphasized by the fact that the additions to the two prose works were actually made after the composition of *La Jeune Parque*. It is not even sufficient to say, as is often said, that Valéry's main line of development runs from the *Introduction* through *An Evening with M. Teste* to *La Juene Parque*: they seem to me to form part of a single work.

"I propose to imagine a man," wrote Valéry in the first of the essays on Leonardo. The *Introduction* is not a study of Leonardo in the accepted sense. All the evidence suggests that at the time it was written Valéry's knowledge of Leonardo's work was very slight. He himself never claimed that there was much resemblance between his Leonardo and the historical Leonardo. "The real Leonardo," he remarked, laconically, "was what he was." He simply chose Leonardo because he represented the "universal mind"—the sort of mind he hoped to become—and tried to "imagine" its workings. His Leonardo, he said in the course of the essay, was "a theoretical being, a psychological *model* which may be somewhat crude, but which represents to some extent our own capacity for reconstructing the work that we are proposing to explain to ourselves."

It is important to notice the use of the words "method" in the title of the *Introduction* and "exercise" in the dedication of *La Jeune Parque*. What interested Valéry above everything was the *process*, was the way in which mind, or as he preferred to call it, "consciousness" functions or ought to function. All his principal works were experimental. Their aim was the exploration of "consciousness"; they describe the perpetual conflict between an "absolute" or "pure" self and a "relative" or "impure" self.

In M. Teste Valéry carried the experiment begun in the *Introduction* a stage further. The name "Teste" is an archaic form of the French word *tête*. M. Teste is



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another attempt to represent pure consciousness: he is "Mr. Head." It is a much more elaborate attempt than the *Introduction*. We see the central figure from a number of different angles. For the definitive edition (no longer called *An Evening with M. Teste* but simply *Monsieur Teste*) consists of the poet's account of his friendship with M. Teste, his letter to him, a reply from Madame Teste who stands for ordinary humdrum humanity and who throws into sharp relief the conflict in her husband's mind, and a monologue by M. Teste himself in the form of the "Log-book."

ON HIS OWN admission Valéry put a good deal of himself into both his Leonardo and his Teste, but it is an understatement to say that there is remarkably little of the historical Leonardo in the *Introduction*. Valéry's Leonardo is a product not of the Renaissance, but of the modern world, is far more like Descartes than the "real" Leonardo. If "Leonardo" is a partial portrait both of Descartes and the poet, Teste's ancestry is more varied. In addition to Descartes and Valéry, there is something in him of Mallarmé, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Degas and possibly Huysmans. For he is a product not merely of the post-Cartesian world, but of the Symbolist Movement. His austere bedroom, with its dull furnishings and the blackboard covered with mathematical formulae, recalls at once Descartes meditating in front of his stove and the Ivory Tower. The substitution of the dull furnishings and the mathematical formulae for the exotic Symbolist trappings defines very neatly Valéry's particular relationship to the Movement.

The transition from the two prose works to the poetry is a natural one. The Young Fate is the vehicle for a further exploration of the nature of consciousness. The similarity of content is accentuated by the similarity of form. *La Jeune Parque* is cast like parts of *Monsieur Teste* in the form of a dramatic monologue because it enables the author to present the "dialogue of the mind with itself," which is an essential part of his "method." The form and content of the three works are so strikingly similar that we seem at times to be listening to the same voice answering or echoing itself. "I am," says Teste, "by being and seeing myself; seeing myself see; and so on." "I saw myself see," says the Young Fate. "No one," we are told in the *Introduction*, "is identical with the exact total of his appearances, and who among us has not said or done something which is *not in keeping with himself*." "I attempted to reduce myself to my real properties," retorts M. Teste. The Young Fate takes up the theme: "Farewell, I thought, EGO, mortal sister, lie . . ." And she meditates no less than Teste on what she calls the "Harmonious EGO, different from a dream, a firm and flexible woman with silences followed by pure acts."

La Jeune Parque has been described with some reason as the most difficult poem in the French language. Whole books have been devoted to its exegesis, and have produced interpretations which are as contradictory as the different interpretations of some of Mallarmé's more obscure poems. It is also a poem of consummate art. It is impossible, without extensive quotation in the original language, to give any idea of the extraordinary linguistic beauty of parts of it which is perceptible to anyone with a feeling for poetry, whether or not he is capable of unravelling the poem's innumerable enigmas. It is, indeed, the extreme rigor with which it is constructed that marks its superiority over the much easier *Cimetière marin*. In the *Cimetière* the poet draws much more directly on the imagery of sun, sky, sea and ships which was part of his birthright, but in spite of its undeniable beauty it is not free from a discreet and highly refined sentimentality.

WHEN ALL has been said that can be said of Valéry's remarkable intellectual gifts and his mastery of language, there remain serious reservations which will count heavily against him when the time comes for a definitive judgment. He described *La Jeune Parque* as "the child of a contradiction." It was the familiar contradiction between the "absolute" and the "relative" itself. At this point we notice a very strange thing. "I am between me and myself," he had written of his experience on "the Night of Genoa."

The truth is that in spite of his immense technical development there had been no corresponding emotional development. He remained precisely where he was in 1892—"between me and myself." He could only have begun to live in the true sense if the contradiction had been resolved and the conflict overcome, but that was impossible because he was striving for a state of consciousness which was incompatible with living. For this reason, the poetry like the two prose works was a prelude to living rather than life. It is only too apparent in the final verse of the *Cimetière marin*: "The wind is rising! . . . We must try to live!"

The emphasis falls powerfully and indubitably on that word "try." Valéry spent the whole of his life brooding over the problem of how to live, as Mallarmé spent his meditating on "the Great Work" which he never managed to write. The outcome is that all Valéry's finest poems are studies in "method," "exercise," experiments rather than an expression of the human condition. It is precisely this kind of interest in "method," which he shared with Flaubert, Mallarmé and Joyce, that stamps a writer as a mandarin. It must be said of him, as it must be said of his master, that he was the author of great lines rather than great poems, that he had hit on a form of poetry which leads in the end to the disappearance of poetry.

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Rising Voices of a Newer Generation

NEW DIRECTIONS 16. New Directions. $2.50.

By THOMAS CURLEY

THE AVANT-GARDE is dead and buried (c.1950), and it may never rise again. In an other-directed culture, such as America is and is becoming, an inner-directed avant-garde has neither rhyme nor reason for being.

The avant-garde is not and never was dead; it is more alive now than ever. San Francisco is the center from which it radiates North and South but not too far East since New York is out of bounds.

New Directions 16 is evidence in favor of the second of the above opinions. I think there are few people interested in literature who will want to neglect this volume. First of all there are about sixty previously unpublished poems by William Carlos Williams. Secondly there is a long polemical and explanatory essay by Kenneth Rexroth which will serve many as an introduction to a number of the other contributors. This is not Rexroth's first essay on the newest avant-garde, the San Francisco Renaissance, the Beat Generation, or whatever other names it has; but it is in many ways the most informative and most interesting as well as the most extreme and most unfair.

According to Rexroth, American culture, far from becoming more homogeneous, is splitting, is undergoing a "radical bifurcation." His essay is an attempt at an historical and social record of "cultural secession." In his view, the genuine avant-garde in America has been all but silenced for the last twenty-five years or so, first by the Bolsheviks and then by the Reactionaries, that is, broadly speaking, the New Critics. To the rising young writers for whom Rexroth speaks such magazines as the *Kenyon, Hudson* and *Partisan Review* are citadels of The Enemy. He goes on to cite the "influences," French and American, on these young writers and then a list of names. Quite a few of them are represented in this volume.

Rexroth has, at least, this much of a case: such a movement does exist and it is genuine and energetic, not an advertising stunt or the fleshed out desire of a millionaire. Something is happening. There is much in this volume that is adolescent, and a lot that seems plain crazy, but very little, if any, downright unauthentic writing. Both James Purdy, whose books are not yet widely available, and Jack Kerouac are represented. So is Denise Levertov with two short poems. I agree with Rexroth again that she is very good and anyone with 75 cents to spare ought to pick up her *Here and Now* in the Pocket Poet Series.

Of all these writers, it may be said that they are consciously *moral*. They have something to say, if not to society as a whole, then to each other. Art is not an end in itself, it is a means of communicating with another or others. And since they are moral, since they want art to be a social force they are also intolerant, clannish and often imaginatively blind. There is a romance of dissipation, a genuine compassion for the lowly, the frustrated, the old, the failures; but there is also contempt and disregard for the mediocre, the middle class and those above them who either succeed or who neither succeed nor fail but just live out their lives in the ordinary way. The best favorable description of such a morality was written years before this movement came into being—by W. C. Williams. "It is *this* to be moral: to be positive, to be peculiar, to be sure, generous, brave —to MARRY, to *touch*—to give because one Has, not because one has nothing. And to give to him who Has, who will join, who will make, who will fertilize, who will be like you yourself: to create, to hybridize, to crosspollinize—not to sterilize, to draw back, to fear, to dry up, to rot. It is the sun."

There is passion, there is energy and genuineness in this description but there is very little wisdom. It is the passion of the young, the lust for life and it knows nothing of humility, of the knowledge one has of one's own nothingness, one's own hypocrisies. Humility is endless, but it does not begin until one has learned *not* to rage against the dying of the light.

POETS OF TODAY IV. Scribners. $3.95.

By LEONARD WOLF

AMERICA likes its poets new and young, and Scribner's gives them to us three at a time, which is at least two poets too many for a review as brief as this. Nevertheless, attention — however telegraphically—must be paid.

The three poets in this volume share with each other and with many of the well-schooled younger poets a dangerous distaste for meddling too deeply with feeling. Their editor, John Hall Wheelock, tries to prepare us for this state of affairs by giving us a polished thumbnail sketch of the history of modern poetry in which "the post-Bomb generation's apparent inability to express feeling" is put into context. We live in an age, Mr. Wheelock tells us, in which, to a large extent, "perception has taken the place of emotion." He also tells us that this is a period in which "It must be admitted that the reading of much of the verse of our time is a task rather than a joy . . ." and that it is an epoch in which there is "the absence of delight normally associated with the experience of poetry."

Now, I think Mr. Wheelock has put the deplorable case neatly, but I do not think, as he does, that the reading of *all* the poets in this volume is "an act attended by enjoyment."

Of the three poets, George Garrett (*The Reverend Ghost and Other Poems*) strikes me as doing

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his job with the most skill. He recognizes the problem of the divided self and worries at it tenaciously. He wants to be able to 'bear the burden of/flesh and the struggle for identity"; to praise "things so beautiful/and strange the mind can't hold them though it wrestles." In one poem he says, "Rejoice. Be lost and found." and it seems to me that his concerns are deftly pointed in the quotation. "Reach From Silence" and "Wishful Thinking," are altogether beautiful poems. The first has the lovely lines "Go armored. No, go nude/ as in childhood or at night." and the second, in which he discovers the enrichments of loss, ought to be quoted in its entirety. Its last lines sum up the valiance of failure and express pity for the successful man since to be successful means:

"Never to be able to deny
three times
Before the rooster crows, never
to curse
Perplexed successful Pilate face
to face."

There are other poems that are as organically intricate and successful as these. "The Quest" is hardbitten and brilliant; "Congreve" sparkles and "The Statue" is dignified, melodic, "elegant and sad."

Sometimes Mr. Garrett makes bad mistakes: "The gulls, lean knives soaring" or "all geometry/ evades the verity/of fractured innocence—" or, "Who calls me zero, I insist/than enemy is nameless worse." But these are the accidents that happen to a fine poet who is in happy transition from excellence to something much, much better.

The poems of Robert Wallace (*This Various World and Other Poems*) are easier to read, easier to approve and, I'm afraid, easier to forget. He gives us intimate, cozy, detailed glimpses of the world as seen by a boy whose cheek has lain long against the summer grass. Like his "Garden Snail," he "seems/ Often to be/meditating/a very tough/Problem, likes green leaves/ and water." He likes also nouns, adjectives and a not particularly useful three line stanza. Sometimes he makes strange, and probably youthful, pronouncements like "Sunly, the day streams/into dark," or, describing a water-strider, "He does/not like being/wet or being/ eaten." Sometimes, quite charmingly, he discovers life's sterner ambiguities.

I think my reaction to the poems of Theodore Holmes (*The Harvest and the Scythe: Poems*) must be put down to personal quirk. His long, long line elaborates tedious definitions at tedious length. Two typical lines from "The Muse of Life" may indicate at least what my trouble is:

"Desire is the flow of eternity
at the level of understanding
In which we burn, a fuse lit
to an infinitely distant keg
of powder . . ."

And so on and on.

Mr. Holmes will regret forever having written, ". . . in speaking a word/We are only wiping our nose on our sleeve;".

The Problem of Our Times

THE END OF PITY AND OTHER STORIES. By Robie Macauley. McDowell, Obolensky. $3.50.

By JOHN F. SULLIVAN

MORE AND MORE, in our times, the problem of evil has presented itself as the problem of pity. Our times may be no more evil, in any absolute sense, than others (though we hear of more evil and know its farthest ranges, thanks to the mass media), but the problem is far more intolerable to us, because we have lost our defenses. With the decay of our last defense, the liberal tradition, we have been left naked to the terrible demands of pity.

Surely the definitive artistic embodiment of this predicament of modern man was achieved by Nathanael West in *Miss Lonelyhearts*. But some self-preservative instinct prevents most of us from going the way of West's character. We may not adopt quite such an impenetrable armor of cynicism as that of West's Shrike, or even quite so mannered a defense as that of Hemingway's heroes; we may, in fact, make do with a kind of catharsis effected by the cheap expenditure of pity for the events of a morning's newspaper or an afternoon's soap opera. In one way or another, however, we escape, most of the time, the full destructiveness of pity.

All of this is beautifully set forth by Robie Macauley in a collection of stories, published as *The End of Pity and Other Stories*. In settings ranging from the occupations of Germany and Japan to the sedate banks of the Grand River, in Michigan, these stories explore the varied responses to the appeal for pity.

Only in the title story and perhaps in one or two others does the Miss Lonelyhearts type appear—the man defenseless against even the pitiable fool. More often, the defenses are up, or, more accurately, they come up with a kind of automatic precision when the emotion of pity is about to be called forth. Sadly, then, human being goes on doing violence to human being.

Other themes are at least subsidiary. Four of the eleven stories deal with military life, especially in the armies of occupation, and in them the meaning of defeat and victory is put to the question. One story encounters the racial theme, and in one the ambiguity of evil is suggested in a way that arouses memories of "The Turn of the Screw."

Three of the stories have an academic setting or characters, and these all display a considerable gift for satire (though it may well be that the academic scene is especially easy to score off). One of these, "The Academic Style," is a perfectly turned example of narrative technique, delightful, if not so penetrating as others.

Even in the stories of academic life, however, the theme of "the end of pity" is at least hovering in the background. For the dry figures who move through them have come to their own special terms with the

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IN COMING WEEKS

The Commonweal has scheduled a number of important special issues for the weeks ahead.

FALL EDUCATION (October 4)—A focus on educational matters to signalize the opening of a new academic year.

FALL BOOKS (October 25)—Featuring literary essays and book articles together with thoughtful reviews of leading titles of the year's principal book publishing season.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS (November 15)—To present an authoritative survey of the season's outstanding new books for children of various age groups.

CHRISTMAS BOOK NUMBER (December 6)—Special articles, feature reviews, and "critics' choices," suggesting a wealth of good ideas for Christmas giving.

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appeal to pity, have taken shelter in a conventional fatuousness which is impenetrable by either art or life.

It remains to be said that these stories are solidly constructed, tha' they manifest a remarkable narrative talent. The style is perhaps on the plain side, but for the most part it is simply unobtrusively fitted to its task.

The Best Test

VOSS. By Patrick White. Viking. $5.

By JEAN HOLZHAUER

REVIEWERS of Patrick White's previous novel (*The Tree of Man*) have commented upon his ability "to supply, to lay bare the conscious, romantic yet private daydream, the unlived life." The ability is given full rein here, in his novel called *Voss*. To permit a play on words that Mr. White himself might indulge, it is not only his Australian origin that accounts for a view of life from "down under." This man writes and his stories take their shape in that place between sleeping and waking, where impossible things are.

The two objections that arise naturally in the reader are both foreseen and dealt with, perhaps a shade more positively than necessary. The image that suits is that of a character in Rosamund Lehman's novel, *The Ballad and the Source,* who, in her potting room each morning, took the baskets and the vases and proceeded to "deal with" the day's flowers.

One objects, that is, to Mr. White's style, chosen to approximate daydream, in which separate phrases and clauses regularly appear as sentences and sometimes paragraphs. The objection is overruled by the immensity of the book. One can be annoyed by a style for perhaps a hundred pages, after which one gives up reading, or gives in. *Voss* is 442 pages long.

One could also object that daydreams are too common, too undifferentiated to supply any but the most ephemeral material for a long story. But the ordinariness of the

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dreams of Mr. White's protagonists are compensated for by their situation, and very nearly overcompensated.

The title of the book is the name of the hero, a German who leads an expedition across Australia in the early years of its settlement, and takes with him the delirium of a girl he has just met, the niece of one of his backers. Voss is unlike any German in experience; perhaps this is because he is seen inside out and perhaps because he resembles Mr. White. Without proof one suspects the latter. The niece, Laura Trevelyan, is unlike anyone else also, but for more comprehensible reasons. A girl of detachment and spirit, she is caught in the strange web of a Victorian society superimposed on brush country. Her dreams encompass wildness and dead, dry wood.

It is the fate of Voss and his Laura to live their romance entirely in the mind. Their few conversations are constricted by fear and convention, uncertainty on both sides and wild surmise left, for the most part, unstated. With Voss's departure on the expedition, their dreams take over. They are able to exchange two letters, though they write others that go piteously astray. In their dreams they meet, speaking the inconclusive language of such territory, and when Voss's last illness is on him, Laura too nearly dies. She is saved for the living by uncertainty, and as he dies, he knows it.

In the end, years later, when people wonder what kind of man the now legendary Voss really was, Laura too wonders.

Mr. White's dreamlike structure of all this is masterful enough, especially the use he makes of the slave girl's child who becomes "Laura's baby" (and is named Mercy), and of light, color and the sound of the Australian wind. One of his several oddities is a social framework that closely resembles Jane Austen's. As can be seen, it is a strange story, and strangely told, long segments of which remain in the mind.

Which may be the best test.

As Mr. White would put it.

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REVIEWERS

Thomas Curley is a young New York novelist who reviews for The Commonweal frequently.

Leonard Wolf is himself a poet, and one of his poems appears in this issue.

John F. Sullivan is a member of the English department of the University of Detroit.

Jean Holzhauer is a frequent contributor to various literary magazines.

Correction: In the advertisement of the volume, The Popes on Youth, *in the August 23 issue, the author's name was spelled incorrectly. The author is the Rev. Raymond B. Fullam, S. J., (David McKay Company. $5.00).*

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